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CENTER FOR THE AMERICAN WOMAN AND POLITICS
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fact sheet

WOMEN IN MUNICIPAL OFFICE 1989

In 1985, women comprised **14.3%** of mayors and municipal council members in the states for which data were available.[1] There were **14,672** women elected to these posts out of a total of 102,329 officials. The percentage of women holding municipal and township offices more than tripled from 1975 to 1985, rising from 4% to 14.3%.

The **highest percentages** of women elected to municipal office were found in the District of Columbia (50%) and Hawaii (30%), each of which has only one incorporated municipality. Of the states with a substantial number of available positions,[2] Michigan ranked highest with 27.5% women among its elected municipal officials.[3]

After the District of Columbia and Hawaii, the ten states with the highest proportions of women in municipal office (mayors and council members combined) in 1985 were:

State	% of Women in Municipal Office	State	% of Women in Municipal Office
Michigan[3]	27.5	Wyoming	17.8
Alaska	23.1	California	17.8
Oregon	22.2	Arizona	17.6
Washington	19.3	Delaware	17.5
Connecticut	18.7	Ohio	16.5

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In **June 1989**, among the **100 largest** cities in the U.S., **17** have women mayors; 4 of these women mayors serve in cities among the 10 largest. In order of city population, the mayors are:

Rank by Population[4]	City	Name	Party*	Year First Took Office
4	Houston, TX	**Kathy Whitmire**	NP	1982
7	San Diego, CA	**Maureen O'Connor**	NP	1986
8	Dallas, TX	**Annette Strauss**	NP	1987
9	San Antonio, TX	**Lila Cockrell**	NP	1975-81/1989
24	El Paso, TX	**Suzie Azar**	NP	1989
35	Pittsburgh, PA	**Sophie Masloff**	D	1988
44	Charlotte, NC	**Sue Myrick**	R	1987
46	Toledo, OH	**Donna Owens**	R	1983
49	Sacramento, CA	**Anne Rudin**	NP	1983
53	Fresno, CA	**Karen Humphrey**	NP	1989
54	Tampa, FL	**Sandra Freedman**	NP	1986
58	Corpus Christi, TX	**Betty Turner**	NP	1987
60	Mesa, AZ	**Peggy Rubach**	NP	1988
72	Richmond, VA	**Geline Williams**	NP	1988
84	Stockton, CA	**Barbara Fass**	NP	1985
91	Garland, TX	**Ruth Nicholson**	NP	1988
95	Spokane, WA	**Vicki McNeill**	NP	1986

* NP indicates mayoral election is nonpartisan.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors reports that in June 1989, of the 880 mayors of U.S. cities with populations over 30,000, **115**, or **13.1%**, are women. Of these women mayors, 31 serve in cities with populations over 100,000.

Among the 28 women serving in the **U.S. Congress** in 1989 (2 in the Senate and 26 in the House) **5** previously served on municipal councils. They are: Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD); and Representatives Barbara Kennelly (D-CT), Jill Long (D-IN), Jan Meyers (R-KS), and Mary Rose Oakar (D-OH).

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[1]Includes data from the District of Columbia. States for which data are incomplete and therefore not included are: IL, IN, KY, MO, PA, WI. CAWP currently updates municipal figures every four years.

[2]Other states with fewer than 100 incorporated municipalities are: NV, 17; RI, 39; DE, 56; AZ, 76; WY, 91; NM, 96.

[3]Michigan is the only state in which clerks and treasurers are included in these figures. They are elected ex officio to the councils and vote on policy matters before those bodies.

[4]According to 1986 data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

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Seattle, WA was the first major city to elect a woman mayor. **Bertha Landes**, who had served as president of the city council, was elected mayor of Seattle in 1926.[1] The largest U.S. city yet to elect a woman mayor is Chicago, IL, where **Jane Byrne** (D) served from 1979-1983. Past women mayors elected to serve among the 100 largest cities have included:[2]

City	Name	Party*	Years Served
Austin, TX	Carole McClellan	D	1977-1983
Chicago, IL	Jane Byrne	D	1979-1983
Cincinnati, OH	Bobbie Stern	NP	1975-76/78-79
Hartford, CT	Ann Uccello	R	1967-1971
Honolulu, HI	Eileen Anderson	D	1981-1985
Huntington Beach, CA	Norma B. Gibbs	R	1975-1976
Huntington Beach, CA	Ruth Bailey	R	1984-1985
Lincoln, NE	Helen Boosalis	D	1975-1983
Little Rock, AR	Lottie Shackelford	NP	1987-1988
Long Beach, CA	Eunice Sato	R	1980-1982
Oklahoma City, OK	Patience Latting	D	1971-1983
Phoenix, AZ	Margaret Hance	R	1974-76/78-80
Portland, OR	Dorothy Lee	R	1949-1952
Richmond, VA	Eleanor Sheppard	NP	1962-1964
Sacramento, CA	Belle Cooledge	NP	1948-1949
St. Petersburg, FL	Corinne Freeman	R	1978-1985
San Francisco, CA	Dianne Feinstein	D	1978-1988
San Jose, CA	Janet Gray Hayes	D	1974-1982
Seattle, WA	Bertha Landes	NP	1926-1928
Worcester, MA	Sara Robertson	D	1982-1983

*NP indicates mayoral election is nonpartisan.

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Elected in 1887, **Susanna Salter** of Argonia, KS was the first woman mayor in the United States; she was paid one dollar for a year of service.

The first Black woman to serve as mayor of a city with a population over 100,000 was **Loretta Glickman**; she was chosen as mayor of Pasadena, CA in 1982.

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Women have presided over both major national organizations of municipal officials. Four women have served as presidents of the **National League of Cities**: **Pamela Plumb**, Portland, ME Councilor, 1988; **Cathy Reynolds**, Denver, CO City Councilwoman-at-Large, 1987; **Jessie Rattley**, then Newport News, VA City Councilwoman, 1980; and **Phyllis Lamphere**, former Seattle, WA City Council President, 1977. The first and only woman to serve as president of the **U.S. Conference of Mayors** was **Helen Boosalis**, then mayor of Lincoln, NE, who served in 1981-82. (In mid-1989, **Kathy Whitmire**, mayor of Houston, TX, was expected to become the second woman to preside over the U.S. Conference of Mayors.)

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Data from a 1981 Center for the American Woman and Politics survey of women in elected office show:

- Women mayors and council members are most frequently between the ages of 40 and 59.
- More than half of all women mayors and council members hold jobs outside of the home at the same time they are serving in office.
- Most women mayors and council members who list occupations outside the home are in professional/technical or clerical/secretarial fields. More than 10% of the women municipal officials are elementary or secondary school teachers, by far the most common single occupation listed by the women.
- More than half of all women mayors and council members have had at least some college education.
- More than 3/4 of all women mayors and council members are currently married, and of those, almost all report that their husbands are supportive of their political careers.
- Fewer than half of all women mayors and council members have children younger than 12 years old.[3]

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[1] Women in American Politics, Martin Gruberg (Oshkosh, Wisconsin: Academia Press, 1968).

[2] List may be incomplete. U.S. Bureau of the Census data on city population was used to determine the 100 largest cities during the years each woman served.

[3] From a series of CAWP studies entitled "Bringing More Women into Public Office," conducted under a grant from the Charles H. Revson Foundation.

WOMEN MAYORS AND MUNICIPAL COUNCIL MEMBERS: A COMPARISON BETWEEN 1975 AND 1985

STATE	Number of Women Mayors and Municipal Council Members		Percentage of Women (Rank Among States)		Percentage Increase from 1975 to 1985
	1975	1985	1985		
AL	85	281	11.0	(33)	230
AK	35	233	23.1	(2)	566
AZ	39	87	17.6	(8)	123
AR	160	365	11.9	(28)	128
CA	220	465	17.8	(7)	111
CO	170	315	16.5	(11)	85
CT	130	240	18.7	(5)	85
DE	22	57	17.5	(9)	159
DC	3	7	50.0	(+)	*
FL	174	311	13.3	(79)	19
GA	77	251	7.8	(40)	226
HI	1	3	30.0	(+)	*
ID	45	141	13.2	(21)	213
IL	---	---	---- NA ----		---
IN	---	---	---- NA ----		---
IA	304	732	12.9	(22)	141
KS	165	445	11.9	(29)	170
KY	---	---	---- NA ----		---
LA	65	183	11.7	(30)	182
ME	87	243	10.4	(36)	179
MD	59	133	15.2	(14)	125
MA	48	217	11.3	(32)	352
MI	*	2,779	27.5	(1)	*
MN	227	542	12.8	(25)	139
MS	82	176	10.5	(35)	115
MO	---	---	---- NA ----		---
MT	57	110	14.4	(15)	93
NE	83	241	7.6	(41)	190
NV	2	15	16.1	(13)	*
NH	39	113	10.7	(34)	190
NJ	213	451	13.2	(20)	112
NM	33	86	16.3	(12)	161
NY	*	797	14.4	(17)	*
NC	141	337	12.2	(26)	139
ND	69	174	8.5	(39)	152
OH	*	1,129	16.5	(10)	*
OK	92	312	10.2	(37)	239
OR	175	344	22.2	(3)	97
PA	---	---	---- NA ----		---
RI	21	30	12.8	(24)	43
SC	72	184	12.2	(27)	156
SD	50	149	8.9	(38)	198
TN	50	144	7.1	(42)	188
TX	277	786	12.8	(23)	184
UT	40	137	11.5	(31)	243
VT	44	87	6.3	(43)	98
VA	117	211	13.3	(18)	80
WA	153	341	19.3	(4)	123
WV	120	202	13.6	(16)	68
WI	---	---	---- NA ----		---
WY	34	86	17.8	(6)	153
NATIONAL	**4,080**	**14,672**	**14.3**		**260**

*The number is too small or 1975 and 1985 data are based on different assumptions so comparisons are invalid.

+The District of Columbia and Hawaii are not ranked because each has only one incorporated municipality.